



# Create a Book Marketing Plan That Sells Books

by Dana Lynn Smith

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## The Importance of Book Marketing Plans

Some authors write and publish books for their own self-fulfillment, and that's great. But if you want to make money or get a wide readership through your publishing venture, it needs to be treated like a business. Among other things, that means having an effective marketing plan.

If you are seeking a traditional publisher, a marketing plan is an essential part of the book proposal. Agents and publishers want to know who the target market is, what the competition is like, what kind of credentials and platform the author has, and how well the author will promote the book. Make no mistake, even if you have a publisher, you will still be expected to help promote the book and you'll need your own marketing plan for that.

If you publish independently or through a subsidy publisher (aka self-publishing company) then you are completely responsible for generating book sales.

Ideally, certain elements of the marketing plan should be developed before the book is even written, especially for nonfiction books.

- Make sure there is a market willing and able to buy the type of book that you are writing. Understand who your target market is, in order to tailor the book to that audience.
- Study the competition. How can you make your book better or different from existing books on your topic?
- Think about how you will be able to reach your target audience and promote the book.
- Design the book title and cover with marketing in mind.

I have found that many authors are surprised to learn how much effort goes into promoting a book. Some authors tend to jump from one promotional activity to another, without any clear strategy. And authors may need to learn new skills in order to be successful in selling books.

There are many ways to promote a book, each book is different, and we all have limited time and budgets, so it's important to put together a written plan and prioritize your book promotion tasks.

A written book marketing and promotion plan will give you a blueprint for promoting your book and keep you focused on what's important. It will also guide you in how best to spend your limited time and money.

A comprehensive book marketing plan is more than a list of ways to promote your book. It also includes an analysis of your target audiences, competition, distribution, and pricing strategies.

A good plan helps you focus on the most effective book promotion strategies, and it's important that your plan is customized for your book and your target audiences.

## What Marketing Really Means

You'll often hear the words marketing, promotion, publicity, and advertising used interchangeably, but there are differences.

**Marketing** is a broad term, encompassing strategic planning of four key elements:

- Product (designed to meet a need for a specific audience)
- Place (where the book is available for sale)
- Price
- Promotion

**Promotion** describes the activities that you undertake to let your target audience know about your book and persuade them to buy.

**Publicity** refers to getting attention for yourself or your book in print, broadcast, or online media (although many people also use this term to mean advertising or promotion). Publicity may include news or feature stories about you or your book, mentions or quotes in articles, or interviews in broadcast media.

**Advertising** refers to paid placement in print, broadcast, or online media or in other venues.

## **Essential Elements of a Book Marketing Plan**

Below is an outline of elements in a typical book marketing plan.

### **1. Review your mission.**

The first step is to review through your mission. Authors write and publish books for various reasons, whether it's sharing their story, inspiring or entertaining others, earning money, or promoting their business or cause.

Consider your mission as you develop a marketing plan that's custom tailored to your book and your goals.

### **2. Select sales and distribution channels.**

Consider how and where the book will be sold, through retailers and wholesalers and directly to consumers.

### **3. Set the price, payment and discount policies.**

- What is the optimal price for various formats of the book?
- How will you accept and process payments?

- Do you need to charge sales tax on direct sales to customers?
- What discount should you offer to re-sellers?
- What commission rate will you pay your affiliates?

#### **4. Describe the Book**

Define the features and benefits of your book to readers. For fiction, write an intriguing synopsis of the story.

#### **5. Study the Competition**

List other books that compete with this book for readers and describe their characteristics. How is your book different or better? For fiction, think about how your book would appeal to fans of top selling books in your sub-genre. Also study how competing authors are promoting their books.

#### **6. Define Your Target Audiences**

This is one of the most important parts of your marketing plan. Define the primary and secondary audiences for your book, their characteristics, and where to reach them. Most books have multiple target audiences, but no book is for "everyone".

#### **7. Write Effective Sales Copy**

Considering what you have listed in the previous steps, write a compelling book description that will motivate your target audiences to buy this book.

#### **8. Write an Engaging Author Bio**

Potential buyers of nonfiction books want to know why they should listen to you – what are your qualifications for teaching them about this particular topic? Author bios are also important for fiction and children's book authors – they give the reader a sense of who you

are. Be careful to make your bio engaging, not dry and boring like a resume.

## **9. Set Your Budget**

Many book promotion tactics are free, but you will still need some funds for things like website fees or graphic artists. You may also need a training budget for buying books or programs to educate yourself about publishing and marketing.

## **10. Determine Your Book Promotion Tactics**

There are dozens of ways to promote a book, ranging from social networking and reviews, to publicity, article writing and speaking. But we all have a limited amount of time and money to spend on marketing, and we each have different skill sets.

An important part of your marketing plan is deciding which book promotion tactics have the highest potential return on investment for your particular book. Some promotions are more effective for promoting novels, while other things work better for nonfiction or children's book authors.

## **11. Develop a Timeline**

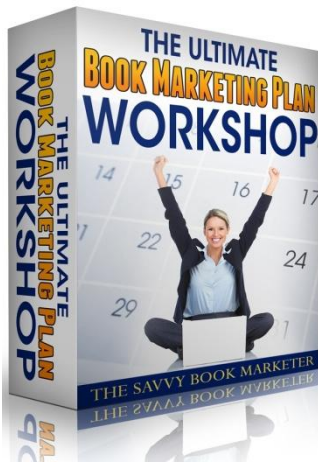
Once you have put together a list of promotional activities to pursue, you will need to prioritize and assign dates to implement them. Some things, like social networking, you may do on a daily basis, while other activities can be scheduled for specific days, weeks or months in the year. Remember to give priority to things that you feel will have the highest success rate in generating sales.

## **12. Measure Your Success**

A book marketing plan is a living document and it's important to measure your progress. You'll need to know what's working and what's not working so well in order to refine your marketing plan for the future.

## Take Action Now to Sell More Books

Whether you're just getting started or your book has been out for a while, take some time now to develop or refine your book marketing plan to maximize your book sales.



To learn more about how to develop your own customized book marketing plan, take advantage of the [Ultimate Book Marketing Plan Workshop](#).

This unique program will guide you step-by-step in defining, reaching and selling to your target audiences.

The [Ultimate Book Marketing Plan Workshop](#) includes five video training sessions, audio recordings and slides for each session, fill-in-the-blank worksheets, checklists and planning tools.

Learn more and register at: <http://bit.ly/BookMarketingPlans>

I've also developed more condensed one-hour book marketing strategy programs geared specifically to fiction, nonfiction and children's authors. Each of these includes a comprehensive book marketing resource guide:

[Sell More Novels](#)

[Sell More Children's Books](#)

[Sell More Nonfiction Books](#)

## About The Savvy Book Marketer

Dana Lynn Smith, The Savvy Book Marketer, helps authors and indie publishers learn how to sell more books through her how-to guides, training programs, blog, newsletter, and private coaching. She has 17 years of publishing industry experience and a degree in marketing. Learn more on her media page at <http://bit.ly/DanaLynn>, and connect with Dana on these networks:



Twitter: <http://twitter.com/BookMarketer>

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Goodreads: <http://www.goodreads.com/SavvyBookMarketing>

## Book Marketing Resources

These in-depth book marketing guides and training programs teach you the skills you need to sell more books.

- How to Sell More Books on Amazon
- How to Get Your Book Reviewed
- Virtual Book Tour Magic
- Selling Your Book to Libraries
- Make Money with Teleseminars and Webinars
- Facebook Guide for Authors
- Twitter Guide for Authors
- Pinterest Guide for Authors

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